

FLANNER HOUSE HIGHER LEARNING CENTER

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT #6 DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE



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This supplemental report presents information about the school in three sections:

- Flanner House Higher Learning Center's Students (enrollment and demographic information)
- Performance at Flanner House Higher Learning Center
- Detailed Description of Flanner House Higher Learning Center's Programs and Activities
(as provided by the school)

2005



FLANNER HOUSE HIGHER LEARNING CENTER

DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE

STUDENTS

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

A

ENROLLMENT AND DEMAND

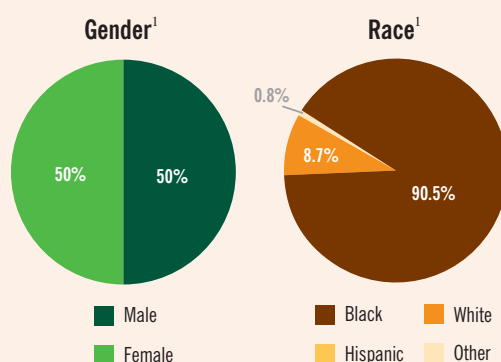
	2004-05	At Capacity
Grades served	9-12	9-12
Maximum possible enrollment, pursuant to charter	175	175
Number of students enrolled ¹	126	N/A
Number of students on waiting list ²	0	N/A

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: School self-report of data, as of August 1, 2005. ■ N/A denotes "Not Applicable." A school may elect to maintain a smaller overall enrollment than that allowed by its Charter with the Mayor's Office. Actual enrollment may exceed the maximum enrollment stated in the Charter by 10%. It is possible that a school may have a waiting list but not be fully enrolled because waiting list figures are aggregated across grades; some grades may be fully enrolled and have waiting lists while others do not.

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

B

STUDENT COMPOSITION



	Flanner House Higher Learning Center
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch ²	100.00%
Special Education ³	10.3%
Limited English Proficiency ⁴	0.0%

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: School self-report of data. The Indiana Department of Education website lists free and reduced price lunch data only for schools who reported this information in October 2004. This school did not report free and reduced price lunch data to the Indiana Department of Education in October 2004; the Mayor's Office thus collected this information directly from the school for October 2004. ■ ³Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners, count reported December 2004. ■ ⁴Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Language and Minority Programs, count reported March 2005. ■ See main report for comparative data.

PERFORMANCE

The charter for the Flanner House Higher Learning Center has been revoked because of problems outlined in this report and the 2004 Accountability Report on Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools.

The section below describes Flanner House Higher Learning Center's (FHHLC) performance over its second school year by addressing the common performance indicators in the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework. The complete Performance Framework may be viewed on-line at <http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Accountability/2005/home.htm>.

In some areas, this section may also provide information about the school's performance in 2003-04 as compared to its performance in 2004-05. For additional information on how performance has changed, view the *2004 Accountability Report on Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools*, also available on-line at the website listed above.

The Mayor's Office conducts evaluations of school performance using a variety of measurement tools, including visits by a multi-member site evaluation team, independent surveys of parents and staff, and expert analysis of standardized test score data. Each section of the following text notes the specific tools used. Supplemental Report 12 contains a complete description of evaluation mechanisms used to prepare this report.

IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

IS THE SCHOOL MAKING ADEQUATE YEARLY ACADEMIC PROGRESS, AS MEASURED BY THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

Performance on the statewide assessment

■ **CHART C** displays the percentage of FHHLC 10th graders who received passing scores on ISTEP+ examinations in fall 2004 and, where applicable, the percentage passing in 2003. Though FHHLC students took the state's ISTEP+ exams in fall 2003, they did so

shortly after the school opened at the beginning of the school year. As a result, the school's results on the 2003 state tests reflect students' starting levels of academic achievement rather than the school's performance.

The school failed to properly administer the ISTEP+ exam to a significant number

of its students. None of the 9th grade students listed on the Average Daily Membership (ADM) enrollment report took the 9th grade ISTEP+ exam. As shown below, in 2004 only a handful of FHHLC 10th graders taking ISTEP+ received passing marks.

C

STUDENTS PASSING ISTEP+ TESTS

At the *Beginning* of the Fall Semester

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

	English			Math			Both (English & Math)			Science		
	'02	'03	'04	'02	'03	'04	'02	'03	'04	'02	'03	'04
10th Graders		11%	4%		3%	2%		2%	1%			

Source: Indiana Department of Education. See page 9 in the main report for statewide data. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Blank areas denote that Indiana did not offer a particular subject test in that grade for that year, or there were no students in the applicable grade in this school at the time of testing.

Adequate Yearly Progress

FHHLC did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2005, as determined by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). Federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires the IDOE to determine AYP for each public school in

Indiana, including charter schools in operation during the 2003-04 school year. The IDOE determines whether each school makes AYP based on the percentage of students who were enrolled in the school for a full year that passed the English and mathematics ISTEP+ tests.

Because of high student turnover at the school, FHHLC's AYP determinations were based on the results for only nine students. ■ **CHART D** below shows FHHLC's AYP determinations.

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

D

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

As Determined by the Indiana Department of Education

Overall Determination: No	English	Math	Attendance	Participation Rate ¹
All students	No	No	Yes	Yes
Black, not of Hispanic origin				
White, not of Hispanic origin				
Free/reduced-price lunch				

Source: Indiana Department of Education. ■ AYP determinations are required by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Blank areas denote that the Indiana Department of Education concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in the particular category for this school. The Indiana Department of Education also concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in other subgroups (e.g., Hispanic, Limited English Proficient, or Special Education) for any of the Mayor-sponsored charter schools; thus these categories are not included in this figure. Attendance Rate determination is only made for "All Students," not for subgroups. ■ ¹To meet AYP goals, 95% of eligible students must participate in testing.

ARE STUDENTS MAKING ADEQUATE AND SUBSTANTIAL GAINS OVER TIME?

Charter schools administered the highly-regarded Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading, math, and language in both the fall and the spring. American Institutes for Research (AIR), a major nonprofit research organization, analyzed the results for the Mayor's Office to determine whether students gained ground, lost ground, or stayed even relative to their peers nationally and in Indiana over the course of the 2004-05 academic year. Because NWEA does not

publish proficiency levels for high school grades, it was not possible for AIR to examine what proportion of students in this school made sufficient progress to reach proficiency over time.

Comparative Gains: How much did Flanner House Higher Learning Center students improve relative to their peers?

As ■ **CHART E** and ■ **CHART F** show, too few students at FHHLC took the tests in both the fall and the spring in

order to report average gains. Following IDOE policy, this report does not include average gains for any subject and grade in which fewer than ten students took the test in both fall and spring. At FHHLC, the number of students who took a given test in both seasons ranged from one to eight; in no subject did at least ten students take the test in both the fall and spring. As a result, no information is reported about FHHLC students' gains in any grade or subject.

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

E

ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Flanner House Higher Learning Center vs. Indiana Norms (IN), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	Flanner House Higher Learning Center Gains vs. IN Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	IN Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
9th Grade Math	*	6.2			
9th Grade Reading	*	1.6			
9th Grade Language	*	2.0			
10th Grade Math	*	-			
10th Grade Reading	*	-			
10th Grade Language	*	-			
11th Grade Math	*	-			
11th Grade Reading	*	-			
11th Grade Language	*	-			
12th Grade Math	*	-			
12th Grade Reading	*	-			
12th Grade Language	*	-			

Source: "Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data," prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of "*" indicates no growth data are reported because fewer than ten students had growth data in this grade and subject. This follows the Indiana Department of Education policy of not reporting performance data when the number of students tested falls below ten (Indiana Department of Education Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook, June 2005, p. 31). A notation of "-" indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have "gained ground" or "lost ground" if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

F

ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Flanner House Higher Learning Center vs. National Norms (US), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	Flanner House Higher Learning Center Gains vs. US Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	US Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
9th Grade Math	*	5.8			
9th Grade Reading	*	2.9			
9th Grade Language	*	2.4			
10th Grade Math	*	4.8			
10th Grade Reading	*	2.6			
10th Grade Language	*	1.9			
11th Grade Math	*	-			
11th Grade Reading	*	-			
11th Grade Language	*	-			
12th Grade Math	*	-			
12th Grade Reading	*	-			
12th Grade Language	*	-			

Source: "Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data," prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of "*" indicates no growth data are reported because fewer than ten students had growth data in this grade and subject. This follows the Indiana Department of Education policy of not reporting performance data when the number of students tested falls below ten (Indiana Department of Education Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook, June 2005, p. 31). A notation of "-" indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have "gained ground" or "lost ground" if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL-RUN?

Is the school in sound fiscal health?

The Mayor's Office commissioned a review of each school's finances by an outside accounting firm. Reviews by the firm revealed that FHHLC was managing its financial practices satisfactorily, with the exception of proper allocation of shared costs between Flanner House Elementary School and FHHLC for items such as personnel costs and other services. Furthermore, the resulting obligations for shared expenses between the schools were not settled in a timely manner. A summary of the school's finances, including financial statements, appears in Supplemental Report 11.

The Indiana State Board of Accounts (ISBA) completed an audit of FHHLC's 2003-04 school year in February 2005. At the time, the ISBA found that the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the cash and investment balances and cash receipts and disbursements for the year ending June 30, 2004.

However, FHHLC failed to maintain accurate student attendance records and to accurately report student attendance to the IDOE in accordance with IC 20-8.1-3. During the site visit, the expert site team found evidence that FHHLC may have over-reported its enrollment for the 2004-05 school year. Because of concerns about the number of students the site visit team actually saw attending FHHLC, the Mayor's Office conducted an in-depth analysis comparing student attendance records against the 2004 ADM enrollment report (used for funding purposes)

FHHLC submitted to the IDOE. Based on that analysis, staff concluded that FHHLC lacked attendance information required by law for a very significant percentage of students included on the 2004 ADM report. Staff notified the IDOE of what had been found. The IDOE then notified the ISBA of the problem, and the ISBA commenced an investigation of the school on July 22, 2005.

A special audit by the ISBA of FHHLC's ADM reporting for the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years was completed on September 27, 2005. The ISBA determined that FHHLC could not substantiate attendance and receipt of educational services for 98 students who were included on the 2003-04 and 2004-05 reports of ADM to the IDOE. As a result, the school must forgo over \$600,000 in state and local funding. As of June 30, 2005, FHHLC had additional debts in the amount of \$142,076.44.

Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?

According to the expert site visit team, very little accurate enrollment information was available for FHHLC. The information available to the site visit team suggested that the school has, very roughly, seventy to eighty students who are consistently attending at any given time – well below the fall 2004 ADM enrollment report of 168 students. The team noted an apparent 40% retention rate and little information about the ultimate disposition of the

students who were not retained; the team stated that “the school must be able to provide accurate information regarding this issue.”

Moreover, the team was also unclear as to the process and exact point at which a student is considered to be officially enrolled at FHHLC. In reviewing student attendance records, the site team found that “some students signed in using the daily sign-in sheets, some completed A+ [Learning System on-line curriculum] baseline assessments, and some had worked on A+ [curriculum] and thus had on-line work logs. There were few instances in which all three forms of evidence were available.” The site visit team also reported that “a high average attendance rate is not consistent with reported staff concerns about absenteeism, guidance counselor reports about the large number of students who attend and drop-out cyclically, and/or attendance reports for recent months. Also, many students reported that the ‘sign-in’ process is not a valid way to keep track of attendance because the sign-in and sign-out times are often falsified and students often sign in and out for each other.”

FHHLC has purported to graduate students who did not meet the school's written requirements for graduation as set out in the charter. Student transcripts show that five out of six students who purportedly graduated in 2004, and nine out of ten students who purportedly graduated in 2005, did not meet those requirements, typically because they either did not have enough credits or had not passed the appropriate courses for graduation.

The expert site visit team reported that FHHLC did not have responsible data gathering procedures that ensure the provision of accurate and replicable data – a requirement mandated by both state and federal governments, educational best practices and policies, and the Mayor's Office. According to the team, FHHLC “must explicitly define what is the school's official evidence and process for determining enrollment, retention, and graduation information.”

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

ATTENDANCE RATE IN 2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR	
	Attendance Rate
Flanner House Higher Learning Center	55.9%
Indianapolis Public Schools	94.2%
All Indiana Public Schools	95.9%

Source: Indiana Department of Education website, preliminary figures.

Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?

The governance review conducted by the Mayor's Office, which included a review of Board meeting minutes, showed that the Board of Directors met monthly during the year and cancelled one meeting. The Mayor's Office attended three meetings during the 2004-05 school year. Observations at the Board meetings revealed that staff members gave reports of activity during the month at the school and the Board engaged in limited discussion regarding issues related to the school. A review of the Board meeting minutes resulted in similar findings. The minutes include information regarding the staff reports presented at meetings, but do not include detail on the Board's discussion. All Board meeting minutes must be accurate and coherent in order to provide a clear representation of business conducted at the meetings. In August 2005, two of the seven members of the Board resigned.

Interviews by the expert site visit team found that the FHHLC Board reports a very high level of confidence in, and support for, the current School Director. However, the team noted evidence that Board members have not been deeply involved in daily school operations, establishing priorities, or preparing a strategic plan for the school.

The site visit team reported that during every site visit at FHHLC since it opened in 2003, all constituents have consistently identified the lack of academic staff as the central barrier to the school's success. The team noted that five teachers and two principals resigned or were terminated from June 2004 through July 2005.

Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?

In surveys of parents and staff at FHHLC, overall satisfaction levels by both audiences remain consistent. As shown in ■ **CHART H**, 94% of parents and 75% of staff reported that they were

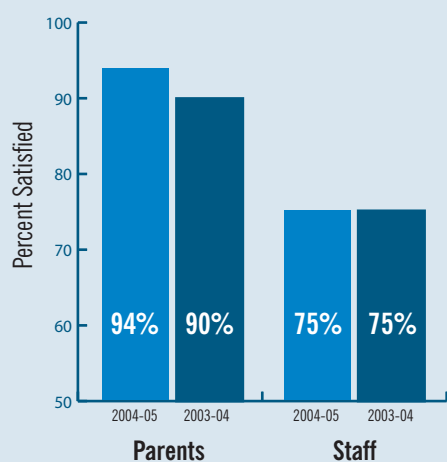
satisfied overall with the school – essentially unchanged from last year's survey results. A similar proportion of parents (88%) indicated they were "extremely likely" or "very likely" to recommend the school to others, as well as to return to FHHLC next year (■ **CHART I**).

■ **CHART J** shows how well parents and staff rated specific features of the school. The top-rated features for both parents and staff are highlighted in blue; the lowest-rated features are highlighted in crimson.

When asked about their satisfaction with specific school features, both parents and staff gave relatively high marks to computer access (84% of parents and 90% of staff). Many parents also rated the student/teacher ratio (72%) and services to special needs students (65%) as either "excellent" or "very good." Conversely, food services (29%) and the enrollment process (39%) were among the lowest-rated features by parents (■ **CHART J**).

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

H OVERALL SATISFACTION



Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2004 and spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Calculations do not include missing responses. "Satisfied" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

I PARENTS AND STAFF WHO ARE LIKELY TO...

	Parents	Staff
Recommend the school to friends and colleagues	88%	88%
Return to the school next year	88%	89%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Calculations include "extremely likely" and "very likely" responses. Calculations do not include missing responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

Flanner House Higher Learning Center

J

PARENTS AND STAFF EVALUATION

Excellent/Very Good Responses of Select Features

	Parents	Staff
Overall quality of education	59%	40%
Quality of teaching/instruction	44%	50%
Curriculum/academic program	56%	70%
Individualized student attention	63%	70%
Access to/use of computers and other technologies	84%	90%
School material and supplies	50%	33%
Classroom management	56%	38%
Student-teacher ratio/class size	72%	56%
Services provided to special needs students ¹	65%	60%
Support services (e.g., counseling, healthcare, inc.)	58%	80%
Opportunities for parental involvement	56%	56%
Communication about student learning/achievement	58%	22%
Communication about meeting the school's mission	47%	50%
Teacher professional development	41%	56%
Faculty/teachers	50%	80%
School administration	47%	63%
School board	50%	17%
School facilities	50%	10%
Food service	29%	22%
Transportation services	47%	50%
Enrollment/admission process	39%	56%
School size	56%	63%
School safety	59%	50%
School location	41%	56%

■ Highest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

■ Lowest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Individual features with the highest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in blue; features with the lowest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in crimson. "Excellent" and "very good" responses are on a five-point scale (scale also includes "good," "fair," and "poor"). Calculations do not include missing and "don't know" responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis. ■ ¹Special needs students include those for whom English is a second language or who have disabilities, academic difficulties, etc.

Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?

The expert site visit team described a polarized school community. The site team characterized the large majority of school administrative/support staff as satisfied with FHHLC leadership – reporting that they have clear roles and responsibilities and enjoy a friendly and helpful climate. The team noted that many of these staff members are not physically located in the school buildings but instead have offices in other buildings on the Flanner House campus. Conversely, the team found that

instructional staff reports high levels of concern or difficulty in many areas, including:

- Concerns regarding the number of “personal friends” or “relatives” of the School Director who are employed at the school. According to the site visit team, “having FHHLC staff who are relatives of the School Director promotes perceptions among some staff that personal connections versus competence and commitment to student learning are the ‘important priorities’ for the school. The team also noted that the Principal of the school is responsible for evaluating the relatives/friends of the School Director and, at the same time, is evaluated himself by the School Director.”
- The absence of a school leader. All constituents report that this key staff vacancy has resulted in a deterioration of the school’s climate and communication, and has been a barrier to stability and success.
- Goal-setting mechanisms. None of the staff interviewed by the team reported either being aware of current goals or being involved in a goal-setting process for the school.

IS THE SCHOOL MEETING ITS OPERATIONS AND ACCESS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO:

organizational structure and governance obligations; physical plants that are safe and conducive to learning; fair and appropriate pupil enrollment processes; reasonable and safe transportation options available to eligible students; and legal obligations related to access and services to special needs and English as a second language students?

The site visit team highlighted several areas of concern, including a few significant deviations from the FHHLC charter. Major departures from the academic program were noted, including reducing the number of hours the school is open to students, the lack of a defined academic year or calendar, and a shift in the criteria level for passing A+ curriculum mastery tests – from 80% down to 70% correct responses. Regarding the change in criteria for student mastery levels, none of the staff members interviewed by the site team could provide documentation of the reasons for this change. According to the site team, “this was a significant reduction in level of expectation and standard for learning. Eighty percent mastery level is widely considered the standard for mastery in schools that use the A+ on-line curriculum. Also, a 70 in most US high schools is equivalent to a low D, which is a very low academic expectation and standard. It is alarming that FHHLC has no set deliberation and documentation process that includes staff and Board review and approval for major changes in academic policies.”

The expert site team also reported that the significant deviations from the school’s approved charter occurred without the Mayor’s Office review and approval.

In terms of the school’s building, both staff and students identified to the team a potentially dangerous metal space between the FHHLC modular buildings, which becomes slick and hazardous in rainy or wintry conditions.

Based on the site team’s extensive interview with the “lead teacher” who has responsibility for special education and a review of special education records, the site visit team identified the following concerns (among others) with special education compliance:

- There are no clear procedures established for identifying whether new students had Individualized Education Plans (IEP) at their prior schools.
- The lead teacher reported that there have been several instances when the initial case conference for a newly enrolled student had not occurred within the ten-day window set by state guidelines.
- The lead teacher also reported that, on several occasions, required staff did not attend case conferences (e.g., General Education teacher or Teacher of Service) because the shortage of staff has made it difficult to have necessary staff at all case conferences. Subsequently, teachers have been asked to sign off on IEP’s without having attended the case conference.
- No documentation was provided regarding how IEP goals are being met and when and how students are being serviced.
- FHHLC reported having 18 special education students as of December 2005. However, the school roster showed 9 students. The lead teacher reported that 9 students had withdrawn but did not provide documentation for the students’ withdrawal.
- Staff members report that there have been no initial evaluations done this school year for the students who have been referred for special education testing.

IS THE SCHOOL PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS?

Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?

The expert site visit team found that staff and students do not agree on the mission of FHHLC or what the ultimate degree offered to graduates will be (e.g., a general diploma, a Core 40 diploma, or a GED). Because the academic staff has different understandings of this mission, they often give students inconsistent academic advice. For example, one teacher may advise a student toward a GED track (which the school does not offer), while another teacher may advise a student toward a Core 40 diploma track. Additionally, students are unclear about what future career pathways or post-secondary education they are being prepared for by the school.

When asked how well the school communicates meeting the school's mission, only 47% of parents and 50% of staff responded either "excellent" or "very good" (■ **CHART J**).

Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?

FHHLC relies primarily on the computer-based A+ Learning System for student assessment and curriculum. The site team observed, and staff and students reported, a wide range of concerns involving the A+ curriculum's characteristics as well as the school's use of the curriculum.

First, the expert site visit team characterized the A+ curriculum in this way: "while the A+ curriculum has potential and is widely thought to do a credible job with content, there are concerns that the on-line curriculum does not ensure development of basic skills, does not ensure deep learning in science and math, and does not focus on higher levels of learning and development of critical thinking skills." The team also observed that the rigor of the A+ curriculum was "sorely lacking." The team noted from on-line records that students repeatedly took practice tests and then the mastery test for a particular lesson in the same day, without

intervening study periods; they also glossed over learning core concepts by guessing correct answers on pre-tests. The team also noted that there are no end-of-course procedures at FHHLC to ensure that students have mastered the A+ curriculum. Lastly, teacher assignments designed to augment the A+ curriculum were often not aligned with the Indiana State Academic Standards relevant to the specific A+ curriculum course and were not sufficiently in-depth to reinforce the A+ curriculum learning.

Secondly, the team determined that a prerequisite for effective use of A+ curriculum was having appropriately trained staff to implement the curriculum. The site visit team documented a number of shortcomings in this area, including:

- Staff perceptions are that the responsibility of monitoring the A+ curriculum learning lab is routinely given to the staff person who is the most recent addition to the team, regardless of qualifications. Per the site visit team, "staff and students report that the majority of the time there is only one person working with students on A+ [curriculum], and much of the time the person in the lab is not a licensed teacher. No person identified a time when teachers with both language arts and math/science expertise were consistently in the lab at the same time." Thus, students cannot easily get help with their A+ curriculum on-line work because relevant staff is not available. The site team indicated that given the heavy dependence on A+ curriculum as the primary element of the academic program, "it is essential that staff respect and contribute to this work and that the A+ [curriculum] lab be staffed at the level necessary to ensure student learning."
- Staff expertise is insufficient to support learning in various curriculum areas, especially science and math. Teachers report that overall, they are able to help students who are working at lower levels in areas outside of their licensure, but they struggle to help students

working at more advanced levels. The site visit team determined that "it is essential that the school have consistent and relevant expertise provided by licensed staff to support student learning on the A+ [curriculum] system and that the school attain their identified licensed teacher to student ratio of 1:15."

- FHHLC continues to use under-qualified math tutors in the A+ curriculum lab without the supervision of a licensed staff member. Math tutors are often college students with constantly-changing schedules and varying levels of knowledge of the subject matter. Staff and students agreed in their interviews with site team members that these undergraduate tutors are not a viable option for supporting the math curriculum.
- In 2004-05, licensed staff began teaching a number of off-line, elective courses that were chosen based on teacher interest. Examples included game strategies, sign language, knitting and crocheting. Selection of these courses was not tied to students' academic learning plans and did not always focus on basic skills or fulfilling requirements. In contrast, students consistently reported to the site team that they would most benefit from off-line courses in math, science, and English.

Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?

The expert site team noted that a potential strength of the A+ curriculum is that it provides real-time assessment of student learning, as well as a wide range of reports to inform and improve instruction. However, the site team reported that "there was no evidence that the FHHLC staff in general fully understand or have proficient skills related to using A+ [curriculum] for monitoring student work and progress or even for using basic report formats."

The absence of an effective academic advisor system was noted as a concern by the site visit team as well. Based on interactions with students and staff, the team found that students are not being consistently and appropriately advised regarding their academic learning options and/or requirements, school schedules, progress, or post-secondary learning options. Many students could not answer when asked in interviews, “who is your advisor?” Those who knew that they had an advisor characterized their interactions with the advisor as very informal and irregular.

One additional area of significant concern raised by the expert site visit team was the administration of the state’s ISTEP+ assessment exams, specifically the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) which is administered to 10th graders. According to the team, “there was sufficient feedback provided to suggest that the school is violating some of these guidelines, which would result in the student tests being invalid:

- One student reported that a Butler student [who is a math tutor] was an administrator for the ISTEP+ exams. This tutor was supposedly left alone with [the] group of students.
- Another student reported that a male teacher read the ISTEP+ exams aloud (which is acceptable if this is an identified accommodation for a special education student but such administration should be only for that one student) and provided clarification of questions when asked (this is not acceptable as a special education accommodation or test administration procedure).
- A staff member reported that the completed ISTEP+ exams sat in the mailroom for weeks before being returned to the [testing company to be scored].
- No staff member reports having seen the results of the ISTEP+ exams administered this school year.
- A parent who is also a staff member reported that her son, who is an identified special needs student, was not allowed extra time for taking the

test as was specified on the student’s Individualized Education Plan.

- Two staff [members] reported that students were left alone for two hours while taking the ISTEP+ test.”

Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?

While students generally reported that staff is committed, helpful, and supportive, the site visit team’s overall assessment is that “the climate is not comfortable or conducive to student or staff success. Staff in offhand comments noted that the environment is ‘tense,’ ‘suspicious,’ and ‘stressful.’ Staff interaction with site team members focused on interpersonal issues and areas of conflict versus teaching and learning. There are high levels of mistrust and the majority of information shared with the site team was based on rumor or conjecture versus intentional valid information from legitimate sources.”

Moreover, all constituents described “unpleasantness” or “struggles” among academic staff and senior administration. The team had no sense that all staff are working for a common goal or vision. Of particular concern to the team were multiple reports that staff had been told that they were not “to air their dirty laundry in public” – a reference to being open and sharing information and concerns with the site team.

Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school’s mission?

Several fundamental weaknesses were observed during the expert site team’s visits. The team found no evidence of a school-wide academic planning process to vet changes in previously-approved FHHLC educational programs. According to the site visit team, “major curricular changes must not result from the arbitrary decisions of one or a small number of staff but must result from serious deliberations and consideration of educational consequences and impact on student learning. Major changes should be presented with justifications and approved by the Board or a designated subgroup.”

As noted earlier, the site team reported that there is no process for students to design an academic plan. The team found only one student with a self-developed four-year academic plan; moreover, the guidance counselor indicated that the school does not consistently use a long-term planning process with or for students. Finally, the site team mentioned that teachers were not able to provide a well-developed syllabus, curriculum plan, and lesson plans that aligned with the Indiana State Academic Standards.

Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?

When asked how well the school communicates about student learning, 58% of the FHHLC parents surveyed responded “excellent” or “very good” (■ CHART J). By contrast, only 22% of staff surveyed gave similar ratings. Only 47% of parents surveyed gave “excellent” or “very good” ratings to communication about meeting the school’s mission (■ CHART J).

Students interviewed by the site team consistently reported that they did not have basic information about academics – such as their schedule for the year, registration dates for off-line courses, or information about the ISTEP+ summer remediation program.

Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?

The staffing list provided to the site visit team by the school showed that four of eight licensed positions and two of three academic support positions were vacant for all or significant portions of the 2004-05 school year. Additionally, according to the team, at least three staff members have been reassigned by the School Director, which has further diminished the provision of adequate support and student supervision by licensed staff.

Staff informed the site team that in the absence of a Principal there is confusion over the process and criteria used for staff evaluations. Several staff reported concerns regarding benefits and compensation procedures.

One additional area cited for attention by the expert site visit team was adequate record keeping. Among other things, the process for accepting and certifying credits from other institutions – and the process for certifying FHHLC credits –

lacked appropriate documentation and supporting details. No protocol for organizing and maintaining academic records was observed by the site team, and transcript reviews from schools previously attended were sporadic.

Staff gave relatively low ratings to teacher professional development; only 56% responded “excellent” or “very good” on the staff survey (■ **CHART J**).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Source: The information below was provided by the school to the Mayor’s Office. It is included here to offer the public a more detailed picture of the school’s programs and activities.

Mission, philosophy, and educational program

The mission of FHHLC is to provide an alternative school environment, adaptable to diverse learning styles and lifestyle circumstances. The school’s design enables students both to obtain an academic high school diploma and to master the skills they will need for success in higher education, careers, and life.

FHHLC’s small school setting is designed specifically to serve students who previously have dropped out of school or are close to dropping out. These students have voluntarily chosen to confront various obstacles and accept the challenges of returning to school. Many students at FHHLC face personal, social, family and/or financial struggles as well as academic difficulties as they work towards completing their education, achieving rewarding careers, and leading meaningful lives. At FHHLC, parents, families, the community and teachers collaborate to guide, support, and challenge students as they overcome barriers to earning their diplomas.

The school’s location on the campus of Flanner House of Indianapolis allows students to connect to on-site wrap-around social services including the ability to obtain emergency food, transportation and shelter, and assistance with receiving child support payments. In addition, free child care is available for students’ preschool-age children at the

Flanner House Child Development Center. These services help remove many of the barriers that prevent these students from returning to or completing school.

FHHLC offers two school sessions Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and one session on Friday, 8:00 a.m. to noon. Students typically attend either the morning sessions or afternoon sessions, but may attend both. The school offers flexible scheduling to accommodate students with work and/or family commitments. Students are expected to attend a minimum of 24 hours each week.

The school utilizes the *Helping Undo the Digital Divide by Learning Electronically* (HUDDLE) approach. HUDDLE seeks to re-engage students in learning by setting expectations for higher education and emphasizing computer-based instruction. HUDDLE, originally developed for a dropout recovery program in Topeka, Kansas, is now used in 150 schools nationwide serving at-risk student populations in a variety of settings. Teachers guide students through lessons using the computer-based A+ Learning System curriculum. This individually paced instructional approach is designed to help students build self-esteem by developing confidence in their ability to learn. The A+ curriculum also allows teachers to continuously monitor each student’s progress in completing on-line assignments and assessments. Teachers also work with students to

integrate additional performance- and project-based activities to apply academic skills in real-world settings. A number of teacher-led small group courses are offered to meet students’ additional academic and personal development needs.

Academic programs and initiatives

- **Advisory Groups.** The instructional day features block scheduling to allow teachers significant time for advisory sessions with students and parents. Each staff member serves as an advisor to a small group of students and monitors each student’s academic progress, college and career development, and attendance. Advisors work collaboratively with the guidance counselor, parents, students, and community agencies to resolve any issues that may inhibit a student’s progress.
- **Independent Study.** Students who face temporary life and/or work situations that make it difficult to attend school during the regular sessions can complete some of their coursework using the A+ curriculum remotely over the Internet. Students must first demonstrate the ability to work independently, and are required to meet with a teacher at least once per week.
- **Small Group Courses.** To help meet the diverse learning styles of students at the school, several core and elective

courses are offered as teacher-led small group classes. These classes are in addition to the courses that students complete using the computer-based A+ curriculum and include classes in English/language arts, math, sociology, psychology, life skills, and American Sign Language. Each course session runs ninety minutes with small groups of students, allowing teachers time to adapt the curriculum to address individual student needs.

- **School to Work.** A School to Work elective course is offered to students who are employed full-time to utilize these student's work experiences to further academic learning. For one assignment, students write about their place of employment, describing its mission and history. Students also conduct a cost comparison study of other businesses providing similar products and services. To culminate the research, each student must

and incorporation. She visited businesses of each type, interviewing the business owners. After compiling her research and findings, she presented the information to her peers and instructors and led a group discussion.

- **Life Skills Curriculum.** FHHLC designed a ten-week life skills curriculum that encourages students to share their personal, real-world experiences. Through study circles, students cover topics such as effective communication, contentment, family history, humor, optimism, resiliency, self-esteem, spirituality, unity, and values. Students also research a personally relevant topic such as teen pregnancy, drug-free environments, safe sex, puberty, and healthy living. After completing their research, students lead a class on the topic by making a presentation with visual aids and administering a quiz to the class.

and Martin University. The school also offers free college admissions test preparation, including one-on-one tutoring.

- **Student Supports.** The school's full-time guidance counselor works with a part-time social worker to coordinate wrap-around services for students and families through the multi-service center and other community resources.

Community partnerships and donations

- **USA Funds.** USA Funds donated \$350,000 towards scholarships for students who attend college after graduating from FHHLC. One graduate from June 2004 and six June 2005 graduates applied for funding for 2005-06. The scholarships, which potentially can cover a student's entire college education, are based on need and merit. USA Funds has also made a contribution to update and reprint the student handbook and the school's informational brochure and has donated gently-used computer equipment.
- **Indiana Dollars for Scholars.** The school is working with this statewide network of community-based organizations to raise additional funds for college tuition scholarships for the school's graduates. Scholarship funds for students from FHHLC are managed by Dollars for Scholars and distributed by the school to graduates pursuing post-secondary education.
- **Butler University Student Tutors.** Through a partnership with Butler University, two college students provide math tutoring at the school several times each week throughout the school year.
- **Vincennes University Black Male Initiative Pre-College Program.** This free program for minority students offers a one-week residential experience at Vincennes University. Teachers and counselors annually nominate outstanding high school juniors and seniors for participation.

LIFE SKILLS PROJECT

A recent semester-long life skills project focused on stock selection and management. Each student was asked to develop a stock portfolio starting with a fictional budget of \$5,000. Students selected stocks based on news coverage of the stock market and the economy. Each student tracked his or her purchases and noted the rationale for buying and selling particular stocks. The student with the best performing stock portfolio received a \$50 prize – to be used towards the purchase of either a savings bond or stock.

prepare a Power Point presentation and present his or her findings to peers and teachers.

- **Project-Based Learning.** To complement the computer-based instruction and small group courses, students must complete projects that require interdisciplinary research and acquisition of knowledge in real-world settings. For example, one student taking an economics class analyzed various models of business structures, such as sole ownership, partnership,

Parent involvement

- **Parent Council.** The school's parent liaison, shared with Flanner House Elementary School, helped create a Parent Council for FHHLC (notwithstanding that many students at the school are over eighteen and live independently). The Parent Council assists with planning school events, fundraising efforts, and connecting students with community resources. The Council sponsored two FHHLC Family Appreciation events and produced a quarterly newsletter. The Council also assisted the students in planning the prom and graduation.

Supplemental programs and activities

- **College Admissions Guidance and Support.** The school provides workshops for students on preparing for college, including how to fill out necessary paperwork for financial aid and college admission. The school's guidance counselor and students visited a number of local post-secondary institutions, including Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Ivy Tech State College,

- **Keys to Work Career Training and Placement.** In 2004-05, the school's guidance counselor referred five students to Keys to Work – a local nonprofit organization that conducts career training and job placement. Any student over sixteen years old can receive a career assessment from Keys to Work, as well as job training and placement via the organization.

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

A twenty-one year old student dropped out of school twice before enrolling in FHHLC – once after a move, the second time when she became pregnant. While attending the FHHLC, she also worked at a full-time job during the day. Her husband works full-time at night so they can provide continuous care for their one-year old child. The student enrolled in FHHLC because of its flexible scheduling and the opportunity for independent study, which allowed her to earn her degree while managing her work and family responsibilities. She was able to complete much of her coursework on-line from home, meeting at least weekly with a teacher to review the material she was studying. Interested in a nursing career, she shadowed a labor and delivery nurse at St. Francis Hospital's south campus and wrote a paper for her English class reflecting on her experience. FHHLC's focus on individualized and project-based learning enabled the student to simultaneously meet graduation requirements and explore future career opportunities. She graduated in June and plans to attend Ivy Tech State College to study nursing.

Staffing

- **Professional Development.** Teachers participate in a minimum of six to eight professional development activities each year. Staff received training from HUDDLE on how to develop custom computer-based classes tailored to individual students' needs. A school coach from the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis works on-site with teachers to encourage the use of cooperative learning and project-based learning instructional techniques.
- **Teacher of the Year Award.** A teacher who has worked at FHHLC since it opened received a Teacher of the Year Award from the local Sam's Club. Teacher-members of Phi Delta Kappa International ran the competition and selected the FHHLC teacher for recognition along with 3,800 other teachers nationwide. The teacher was recognized for her work with a student who had verbalized suicidal thoughts to the teacher. The teacher ensured that the student addressed her personal challenges and remained engaged in her studies.

School management

The School Director, Cynthia A. Diamond, provides leadership to all personnel in carrying out the school's overall goals and objectives. The Principal (position vacant at the end of the 2004-05 school year) shares in the administration of the day-to-day operations of the school, grant writing, curriculum development, and teacher evaluations. DeNeen Owens-Collins, Business Manager/Start-up Coordinator,

monitors the school's budget, compiles all financial information, writes grants, and serves as the liaison to the IDOE and the Mayor's Office. Libby Scott, Director of Public Relations and Communications, is responsible for community outreach, recruitment planning, design and development of promotional materials, and media relations.

School governance

The members of FHHLC's Board of Directors are responsible for ensuring that staff members implement the mission and vision of the school. Board responsibilities also include setting overall school policy, hiring and evaluating the performance of the School Director, and monitoring finances. In 2004-05 the Board attended a series of sessions to plan the future direction and growth of the school, led by a specialist in charter school board strategic planning. The Board has five members, including a social worker, a child psychologist, a community leader, a businessman, and one corporate executive.

Facilities

FHHLC is located on the campus of Flanner House of Indianapolis, on the near northwest side of Indianapolis. Temporary modular buildings used by the school contain four classrooms, two computer labs, a student lounge/cafeteria, and a kitchen area. An attached modular building houses the main school office, a reception area, a small conference room, and individual offices for the Principal, lead teacher, guidance counselor, and the parent liaison.